

Travelling Light: Images (via Wicomb) from the Gifberg(e) to Glasgow

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My main title – not original – is borrowed in this instance from a book by the South African photographer Paul Weinberg. The work of the British artist Roger Palmer also frames this visual travelogue on the writings of Zoë Wicomb, winner of a prestigious Windham Campbell prize for fiction in 2013.

We know, from biographical blurbs, that Wicomb was born in the rural western Cape – Little Namaqualand. We know, from her first collection of stories *You Can't Get Lost in Cape Town* that the Gifberg(e) is a mountain. It is not that far from the green Beeswater sign that dots the N7 on the way up north from Cape Town. Beeswater, we are told in these biographical blurbs on book covers, is where Wicomb was born – there or nearby. If you pull in from the main road towards Beeswater, you see a gate and a track. No distance is offered. You do not know how many miles it is or how long it will take. It is near Vredendal, a town big enough to find cell phone repair shops, supermarkets and dentists. Cape Town is the metropolis; Beeswater the hinterland.

Overseas, Wicomb comes first to London; Nottingham follows; Glasgow later. This cosmopolitan Scottish city – edgy and elegant at the same time – has been home to Wicomb since 1994. How true would it be to say that Scotland (or Glasgow) contributes to the shape of her work? To what extent does South Africa (or the Cape) (or Namaqualand) continue to inform her fiction, and on what terms does it set the stage for Wicomb's latest novel, *October* (2014)?

Exploring ideas of origins and relocations, place and (auto) biography, this essay negotiates the borderlines of image and text. The snapshot and the quick moving image are integral companions to the essay, documenting and mapping ideas of the translocal, and the ways in which we might get there.